

The background image is a photograph of a large, weathered stone wall. The wall is composed of several rectangular blocks, some of which are carved with relief sculptures of human figures. At the base of the wall, there is a series of small fountains or water spouts. The wall is situated in a dry, hilly landscape with sparse vegetation and a clear sky. The title 'The Immediate Future' is superimposed on the top part of the wall in a white, serif font.

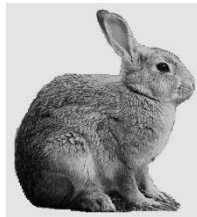
The Immediate Future

Trevor Joyce

Smithereens Press

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smithereens.press@gmail.com

THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

For Anna

all we ask
is two
minutes
of your time

is that you
be courteous

is that you
have an open
mind

if you
continue
in this vein
sir

i regret
that we may
be forced
to

some stranger
makes a grand
entrance

starts right in on
a wild story

how
uncountable

night fauna
congregated
dead before
his door

his chest is
bright with medals

so sure it all
makes sense

but what?

everyone travels
nowadays so
no-one moves

once dice
were spotted
going down

escaped
uncertainties
multiplied
contagion

rendering even
the solvent
illiquid

none could
be cleansed

but stand
now sunk

driven deep
like nails
into their
familiar

heard crying
noise and tumult
in the night

like dogs
at each
other's throats

couldn't make
anything
out of it

next morning
blood was seen

when he saw
the blood
he knew what
it all meant

seeps through

colouring
the ambient

which presents
as memories

this may also
be simulated
with words

which stain
the local
clusters

gold
vermilion
lavender

so making them
available
to experience

restricted
understanding

what are you
doing?

hesitation

a deliberate air
corroborates
a tacit
ceremony

do you
feel as
i feel

a sense
of something
lost something
absent yet
nearby

this piece is
very familiar
to me

unless it's
similar
to something
else

day of
cleansing

men forget
their women

women their
children

the slate is
wiped clean

words rinsed
clear of old
associations

all history
obliterated

occurrence of this
climacteric
is irregular and
unpredictable

must be
professionally
provoked

early foresight
comprehends

the king's
health

his hunts
his dreams
those cities
he constructed

his income
and his absolute
decrees

theological
constriction
follows

life-events
interrogated
shrink
in range

negative outcomes
are not entertained

all is
auspicious

the flow
diverted
overnight

we woke
to stone
rivers lakes
of sand

sleep now
under bridges
which span only
slow air

slaughtered
our parched
herds

disintegrated
our dry
vessels

learned
decorative
complaint

plangent in
imported
formulae

how much must
something
change till
it become
another

so long a
thing may be
and yet
survive
itself

when every least
circumstance
bears already
the wounds
of its futurity

nothing
is to be
taken
lightly

this then is
the workshop
where men fiction
up their lives?

very unconvincing

so much
symmetry clean
outlines flat
primary colours

it's a toy
a bogus front
a decoy

to start with
the heart isn't
heart-shaped

sight did
not exist
before the birth
of eyes

nor speech
before creation
of the tongue

although he knew
what he would
say he found
that he had
said something else
instead

what does
he see?

certain chambers
were overlooked
in the systematic
clearout

to these we
tracked down
the source of
infestation

and found them
pullulating

infested with
gods swarming

their nits
lodged
in the weave
of causes

hatching in
unexpectancy

from some
commanding
forward
ridge
of history

where disciplined
reserve lets cool
nostalgia

drill
back to us
in this
our time

when it was
still particular
to gods
to be
immortal

and to men
to die

an immense
force
somewhere
out there

driving grit
into and against
the structures

the room filled
with the green
stench of dust
and sand

inside doors
thudded in
their frames
with the violent
alterations
in pressure

forward the
bastion heaved

field shook
beneath the
storming
columns

violent
concussion
of the air

dust and
dense smoke
marbled

with
gristle
limbs
stones
timbers
masses
of earth

confusion
of burnt
and burning
bodies

death
gleaned

attention
centered
on the well
-preserved
skeleton
of a young
soldier

with coins
from the great
war period
in his pocket

what shocked
us was that he
was still holding
a pencil
stump in his
right hand

as surge
and torsion
of the great
thundering

all through
an involved
whirling

nowhere
surface

nerved and
mapped only
in its churning
inmost

deep ab
omination
too troubled
for skin

blades and
flanged bones
shuddering
nocturnal
turbine

much remains
fluid formless

and as such
is wasted

like the water
of our rivers

air within
our winds

yet can be
provoked to
retaliatory
outburst

then may be
guided
shaped
domesticated

isn't that
better
now?

at night
the milk
glows blue
in its jug

breakfast
indiscretions
feed
laughter

some words
are best
not buttoned
by the lip

swifts screech
high in the
different blue above
drenched earth

some spills
are innocent

granted
sufficiency
of life

she will visit
or come infinitely
close

to all
emotional
states

which in theory
she could ever
reach

even those
statistically
most unlikely

that this fact
grieves her

is itself
a start

virtuosos
of the funerary
sacrificial
diplomatic
and hospitable
arts

equilibrists
of lover
and beloved

exact their game
from the chaos
of wild potentialities

the true fan
anticipates
each variation
rush reserve

the client nods
and pays

prognosticators
bring you
cedarwood

the widow
offers roasted
flour

poor folk
give oil

the wealthy
farmer from
his flock
selects
a lamb

all these
to praise you

that you may
skew the
probabilities

fix the game

firmly
hinged

wrought
to the odd
unnecessary
flourish

draw back

no wall
no fence

this gate
is no access
but ornate
obstruction

withdraw further
look beyond

big house
gone too

finch stutters
on the rusted iron

a gate
snapped
shut

willow seeds
descend
on silk

lilac and
bay both
trembling

fragrant fall
enveloping me

wisteria
above

i was
waiting
for your step
on the grass

first huge
drops of
a summer
storm

steps are
measured

gestures
and words
enumerated

the effect is
as with
well-fitted
masonry

stone set so
on stone
eliminates weather
hand ear eye

at the slightest
slippage or
omission

deep anxiety
wells up

sanctions
trigger

like when
there's a sharp
catch

as the streaming
obstructs itself
in its own
course

till it again
release

flooding
the sumps

seeding
downstream
proliferation

so there be
harvests

old settlements
made fruitful
in fresh days

fundamental
unsettling
fortifies

those born during
the war were
the true leaders

earlier were broken
by regret
later spoiled

never allow
the state
of things settle
imperfectly

now that cohort
is exhausted
we require further
enormities

the city child
is terrified
by country night

total
immediate
and flat

rest is not
easy

investiganda
may present
as smooth

or harsh and
brightly savage

dreamt red
needs no
extraneous
light

oblivion
sweetens
the deal

orchard's long
grubbed up

ages now
since we saw
an apple
out of it

but it was fun
to raid even
when the crop
was sour

remember
when the whole
sky plunged
past those
high boughs?

incursions
of a hunting
king

enemy
assaults

voracious
birds and
insects

onslaughts
of wind
rain drought
or flood

entering
abruptly
at one
horizon

exiting
haphazardly

there is now
no appetite
for such
calamities
in actuarial
circles

if from excessive
ruggedness

populations
migrate to
foothills

are trapped
there and
expire

or at high
mutation rates
are driven far
below the peaks

to drift
and die
in fitness
lowlands

retune the
landscape
to smooth

futures are
difficult

must be teased
out of the
wildness
of the living

sadness or
undue panic
in the beast
is a distinct
indicator

should the
ceremony
discover
flawed or
terrifying
flesh all bets
are off

cold dry

ghosts
from wild
stands
of grass

circumambulate
the now very
sedentary

polished stone
spades
cultivated

in these
sequences

sank houses
into the soft
soil

an inhumation
cemetery
here too

all cushioning
against
straw clocks

massive slabs
of light lofted
over zones
of metropolitan
importance

stained to
saturation

such immense
gravity distorted
the foundation
forming basins
where sentiment
sediments

strata of sheet
metal mark
levels where molten
coin and weaponry
rehardened

make no
mistake

be under
no illusion

be clear
about this

let no-one
fool them-
selves

we are
where
we are

the cup-
board's bare

never for
one moment
imagine

don't think

things are
about to get
ugly

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Trevor Joyce was born in 1947 in Dublin, Ireland. With the poet Michael Smith, he co-founded New Writers' Press and the poetry magazine *The Lace Curtain*, key channels for modernist and avant-garde writing in Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s. His collected poems to the year 2000 were published as *with the*

first dream of fire they hunt the cold (2001). Subsequent work has been collected in *What's in Store* (2007) and *Selected Poems 1967-2014* (2014). Two recent volumes engage with the work of Edmund Spenser by way of radical translation, *Rome's Wreck* (2014) and *Fastness* (2017). He has lived in Cork since 1984, and is a member of Aosdána, the Irish affiliation of artists.



<http://smithereenspress.com>

smithereens.press@gmail.com